

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**COLOMBIA: GATEWAY TO DEFEATING
TRANSNATIONAL HELL IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 03 MAY 2004		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Colombia: Gateway to Defeating Transnational Hell in the Western Hemisphere				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Stephen Weiler				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached file.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: COL Stephen P. Weiler

TITLE: Colombia: Gateway to Defeating Transnational Hell in the Western Hemisphere

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 19 March 2004 PAGES: 28 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Colombia is host to the transnational threats of insurgency, terrorism, illicit drugs, kidnapping, money laundering, and human trafficking. These transnational threats can not be neutralized without U.S. assistance. The U.S. has national interest in Colombia because the illicit drugs from Colombia are destroying large numbers of U.S. citizens and are funding international terror groups. Colombia is an important trading partner to the U.S. with \$11 billion in trade; supplying 10 percent of U.S. oil and 80 percent of the cut flower market. Plan Colombia has recently experienced success under the leadership of President Uribe. In a post 9/11 world, Colombia must be assisted in permanently restoring its security and be prevented from becoming a failed state to ensure regional stability. The link between illicit drugs and terror groups has been validated. The U.S. should increase assistance to Colombia, including authorization for the judicious use of U.S. combat power.

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COLUMBIA: GATEWAY TO DEFEATING TRANSNATIONAL HELL IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

“Colombia’s 40 million citizens must not be deserted by their neighbors. Leaving the Colombians to deal in isolation with a pervasive drug problem will deeply affect all 800 million of us in the Western Hemisphere through addiction, violence, and corruption.”

- General Barry R. McCaffrey

This paper addresses the threat to US National security interests posed by transnational threats prospering in ungoverned areas in Colombia. Forty percent of Colombia is under control of insurgents. For forty years, Colombia has faced omnipresent violence, corruption, illicit drug trade, internationally organized crime, massive numbers of internally displaced persons, and appreciable poverty, resulting in what is known as “the Colombian crisis.” The center of gravity to defeat the Colombian crisis is establishment of the rule of law through security.

International efforts to assist the government of Colombia in eliminating the Colombian crisis have met with little success, primarily due to flawed Colombian leadership and Congressional restrictions on U.S. assistance to Colombians.

This paper will review U.S. interests in Colombia, identify known causes of Colombia instability, address U.S. policy for Colombia (Plan Colombia), and review the problems and recent successes encountered in implementing Plan Colombia. The paper posits that continued success will result in eliminating the Colombian crisis and thus reducing the threats to U.S. security from the insurgents in Colombia and provides recommendations for increased U.S. assistance.

THE COLOMBIAN CRISIS: A THREAT TO U.S. SECURITY

The Colombian crisis has placed the government and citizens of Colombia and of the U.S. are under attack by a political insurgency conducted by a triad of narco-terrorist organizations: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), the National Liberation Army (ELN-Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional), and the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC-Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia). These terrorist organizations, which operate through, and are funded by, the illicit drug trade, seek to maintain the Colombian crisis as their strategic environment. Only by eliminating the Colombian crisis can these insurgents be defeated.

It is imperative that the U.S. recognize Colombia’s endless supply of drugs for what it is—a means of destroying our citizens’ lives and a way to fund groups who are dedicated to

eliminating the U.S. as a world leader. Colombia is a primary locus of strategic interest due to the vast amount of illicit drugs it supplies to the U.S.

Illicit drugs can be seen to be chemical weapons that produce mass casualties within the U.S. population everyday. This production is endless because the drugs are delivered by methods which so far prove impossible to control. When illicit drug use creates over 13.0 million drug users and 3.6 million addicts living in the U.S., illicit drugs can be defined as a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).¹ The ruinous effects of illicit drugs, 52,000 U.S. deaths and 160 billion dollars in drug induced damage, are consequences which overwhelm first responders and qualify illicit drugs as a WMD.²

The British used illicit drugs as a WMD in the early 1800's to bring China to its knees. Britain desired access to the wealth of China, but the Chinese did not want to trade with the British. To force trade, Britain began importing opium in large quantities into China. With an unending supply of cheap opium, China suffered pandemic drug addiction. The government, incapable of stopping the addiction, was helpless and by the early 1900's over half of the population of China was addicted. China's opium-damaged society lasted more than a hundred years.³

Perceiving illicit drugs as a narco-terrorist-launched WMD attack against the U.S. places a different priority on the U.S. dedication of resources and public support to counter the Colombian crisis.

US INTERESTS IN COLOMBIA

US interests in Colombia focus on regional stability, a source of trade and energy, Colombia's participation in the global war on terrorism (GWOT), and its elimination as a major source of US illicit drugs.

Colombia is the second oldest democracy in Latin America. Colombia's survival as a strong democratic government is in the best interests of the U.S. Government. Regional stability is strongest when democracy is the predominant form of government; no democracy has gone to war with another democracy. In strong democracies the citizens lack interest in changing to an alternative form of government. Thus, strong democracies have strong security environments that deny terrorists access to sanctuary for logistics, training, and illegal operations (illegal arms, drugs, and human trafficking).

Colombia's crisis threatens its neighbors by its exportations of its insurgency, violence, and illicit drug trade. CIA Director George Tenet stated to the Senate Intelligence Committee in 2001, "as we make progress against the FARC and drug trafficking organizations....it's going to

spill over into those [nearby] countries". Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela have dealt with massive numbers of refugees, cross-border firefights with the triad, and illicit drug manufacturing in their countries.

The U.S. has significant interest in Colombia as a major trading partner. In South America only Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela are closer than Colombia as U.S. trading partners. In 2003, the U.S. exported \$4 billion and imported \$6 billion in goods. This exchange of commerce boosts both Colombia's and U.S. economies. U.S. investment in Colombia seeks long term economic growth for Colombia to reduce the level of poverty and thereby promotes stability in government. Over 54 percent of Colombians live below the poverty line, subsisting on less than \$2 dollars a day. Petroleum, gas, and chemical manufacturing draw the greatest amount of U.S. investment. To stimulate and stabilize Colombia's economy, the U.S. government has made certain exports to the U.S. tariff free, resulting in higher employment in the Andes and a viable alternative source of national economic improvement.⁴

Colombia provides a significant portion of the current U.S. energy requirements. Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador provide 20 percent of U.S. oil imports. Vast amounts of untapped oil fields in Colombia are a source for future U.S. energy needs. Colombia's current oil reserves, over 2.6 billion barrels, are only 20% of Colombia's potential oil reserves.⁵

Colombia becomes an interest to the U.S. regarding the GWOT because its three international terror groups. These groups not only attack U.S. interests, they connect to other international terror groups, and threaten the survival of Colombia as a democracy.⁶

Fifty Five percent of all terrorist attacks on U.S. interests in 2001 occurred in Colombia. Occidental Petroleum Corporation, a U.S. based oil and gas company built a 490 mile pipeline that can move over 130,000 barrels a day. In 2001, the ELN and FARC attacked the pipeline 170 times, doing \$450 million in damage, making the pipeline useless for 66% of the year, and spilling 3 million barrels of oil (the equivalent of 14 Exxon Valdezes tankers) into Colombia's earth.⁷ President Bush authorized \$98 million to assist the Colombians in protecting the pipeline, resulting in the arrest of three members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

These IRA members were assisting the FARC in bomb making technologies. In January, 2002, the FARC began to use new sophisticated bomb techniques that paralleled IRA bombing methods. The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism states that the U.S. will, "disrupt, over time degrade, and ultimately destroy terrorist groups."⁸ Eliminating or neutralizing these terrorists is an objective of GWOT and President Bush's National Security Strategy.

The greatest impact of Columbia on U.S. interests is its position as a source of illicit drugs. Colombia supplies over 90 percent of the cocaine and 65 percent of the heroin used in

the U.S. The effects of illicit drug use in the U.S. include 52,000 lives lost and \$160 billion annual damage to U.S. society. An estimated seven out of ten prisoners in U.S. jails are interned due to illegal drug-related activity. Stemming the flow of drugs is essential to the U.S. National Counter-Drug Strategy and to reducing the 13.9 million illicit drug users in the U.S.⁹

U.S. policies and operations to stem the flow of illegal drugs from Colombia to the U.S. have failed to decrease the supply or the cost of drugs. U.S. and Colombian counter-narcotics efforts to reduce the supply of illicit drugs in Colombia have failed and will continue to fail until Colombia defeats its insurgency by establishing government control throughout the country. As documented in The U.S. National Drug Control Strategy, diminishing the supply of illicit drugs from Colombia is essential.¹⁰ As of April 2001, drug users spent over \$63 billion on cocaine. The estimated profit to wholesale drug suppliers was estimated at \$50 billion annually.¹¹ The illicit drug market in Colombia generates approximately \$5 billion dollars in profits. Colombia's Gross Domestic Product is approximately \$90 billion. In Colombia, profits from illicit drugs fund the insurgents who defy the rule of law and control their fiefdoms by bribery, intimidation, and massacre of citizens. The Government of Colombia (GOC) has stated that profits from cocaine pay for over 50% of the weapons, equipment, and supplies for the triad.¹²

US FOREIGN POLICY

The President has committed the U.S. to assist Colombia. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of September 17, 2002 states,

"Parts of Latin America confront regional conflict, especially from the violence of drug cartels and their accomplices. This conflict and unrestrained narcotics trafficking could imperil the health and security of the U.S. Therefore we have developed an active strategy to help the Andean nations adjust their economies, enforces their laws, defeat terrorist organizations, and cut off the supply of drugs."¹³

The President stipulated that once a nation state has been clearly identified as a terror target, the U.S. Government will "Ensure the state has the military, law enforcement, political, and financial tools necessary to finish the task."¹⁴ The NSS reflects an understanding that weak states such as Afghanistan and Colombia are vulnerable to growth of terrorist networks and illicit drug operations within their borders.¹⁵ As Bush stated in the NSS, "the U.S. will help Colombia defend its democratic institutions and defeat illegal armed groups"¹⁶. The NSS clearly lays out the major US foreign security policy goals¹⁷. These eight goals can be met in the Western Hemisphere by a bi-lateral support effort between the U.S. and the host countries.

The U.S. has assisted Latin America since the mid 80's to rid itself of communist-sponsored insurgency. Countries receiving U.S. assistance must assume primary responsibility

for providing combat forces. Second, these countries must devote a fair portion of the cost of the insurgency and provide proof that it has used resources effectively. Third, the country must demonstrate an increasingly greater responsibility for their own defense and required finances. By 1992, 21 out of 23 countries in Latin America had become new democracies.

Now Colombia's survival as a democracy is threatened by the triad of terrorists (FARC, AUC, and ELN) who fund their activities from profits from the illicit drug trade. After years of U.S. foreign policy myopia the inseparable nexus between the illicit drug trade and terrorism in Colombia has been validated by the NSS. "In Colombia, we recognize the link between terrorists and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that help finance the operations of such groups."¹⁸ .

The U.S. policy for Colombia is to provide security assistance to democracies that are threatened by insurgency. In Colombia insurgency consists of a host of transnational threats that cross into other nations and threatened their security. Colombia continues to satisfy U.S. security assistance requirements and merits additional U.S. assistance, including authorization for use of U.S. combat power in fighting the insurgency.

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism legitimizes the use of U.S. force in Colombia stating, "The U.S. and its partners will defeat terrorist organizations of global reach by attacking their sanctuaries; leadership; command, control, and communications; material support; and finances."¹⁹

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT IN COLOMBIA

The Republic of Colombia, approximately twice the size of the state of Texas, is located in the north-west corner of South America. Colombia lies surrounded by Panama and the Caribbean Sea to the north, Venezuela and Brazil to the east, Peru and Ecuador to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west.²⁰

Colombia's geographic characteristics make Colombia difficult to control and govern. A third of the interior of the country is occupied by Andean mountain ranges. The three main Andean mountain ranges run parallel through to the western coastline. Lowlands run along Colombia's coasts. More than half the landmass is covered with tropical rain forests. The pacific coast's swamps and dense jungle forest are inundated with massive daily rains. Only the Caribbean coast produces arable land, with slightly less than two percent of Colombia's landmass used for agriculture.²¹

Colombia is divided into 32 departments, similar to our states. Over 75 percent of Colombia's 37 million civilians live in the cities.²² Transportation within the country is difficult

due to a lack of roads and an abundance of mountains and tropical swamps. Rapid movement throughout the county is best accomplished through the use of aircraft.

Colombia is the only South American country with access to both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, which makes it ideal for transporting and exporting illicit drugs by sea. Government control of Colombia's 5,000 miles of coastline is both problematic and resource intensive. There are 10,000 km of navigable rivers among these mountains. And the Andean mountains provide natural fortresses for insurgents and drug manufacturers. The mountains go as high as 17,000 feet, while Colombia's helicopters reach their service ceiling at around 10,000 feet.

INSTABILITY

Colombia is a nation in crisis. Colombia's government is unable to resolve its destabilizing problems. There is insurgency from a triad of terrorist groups controlling 40 percent of the country and undermining the government's authority; uncontrolled mass violence; widespread absence of the rule of law and a judicial system in of reform; uncontrollable manufacturing and distribution of illicit drugs; massive poverty; internally displaced persons; and a population in need of security and human rights.

If not yet a failed state, this crisis has brought Colombia to the brink of failure. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) defines failed states as "countries in which the government is steadily losing the ability to perform its basic functions of governance and is losing legitimacy...with varying conditions that may lead to civil and communal strife or that may have resulted from such conflict; humanitarian crises, such as starvation and mass refugee movements: and increasingly criminality and widespread corruptions"²³.

POOR GOVERNANCE

Colombia is a nation state that has been plagued with practices of bad governance. Governance is the capacity of the state to:

- establish and secure the rule of law
- provide essential services
- open its government activities to examination of the public
- stand accountable for its government actions
- commitment to the public good.²⁴

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, "Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development". In Colombia, essential government services such as an adequate police, military, and judicial systems, as well as sound communications network are not present in the parts of the country controlled by the

triad.²⁵ USAID doctrines states, “no amount of resources transferred or infrastructure built can compensate for-or survive-bad governance”.

Poor governance means a lack of public security. Over 170 of Colombia's 1,100 townships lack any police or military presence. The police are concentrated in the urban centers of Colombia leaving the rural poor to defend themselves against the triad threat.²⁶ By comparison, Peru has 3,500 police per million people. Colombia, while experiencing insurgency and rampant illicit drug activity, has only 1,670 police per million people.²⁷

Colombia's ineffective judicial system contributes to the lack of the rule of law. The judicial system can only produce a two to five percent conviction rate for any crime.²⁸ Ironically, Colombia has the top number of judges of any democracy, 17 per 100,000. Scholars suggest that bribes and corruption derail the judicial system.²⁹ Any effort to establish stability in Colombia must establish active systems of good governance throughout the entire nation.

SOCIAL DISPARITY AND CORRUPTION

Historically, over 70 percent of Colombia's wealth is concentrated in the upper 20 percent of the population. In 2001, Colombia's National Planning Department placed 60 percent of Colombia's population below the poverty line, with over 80 percent of the poor in the rural areas.³⁰ Epidemic poverty fosters the growth of insurgency.

The economic potential of a country lies in the education level of its population. The globalization of advanced technology demands that a population be educated to be competitive in today's world market. Colombia has a poor education system. On standardized tests, the children in Andean countries are well below the quality standard of industrial and middle income countries.³¹ Most students at higher levels of education are from higher income brackets. The disparity in education leads to income inequality which stimulates the class conflict between the elite rich and the mass of Colombia's poor.

CORRUPTION AND TAXES

Colombia's poor governance allows widespread corruption. A UN study concludes that the cost of corruption by public employees was ten times greater than the cost of corruption from common criminals.³²

Colombia's ability to manage and collect tax revenue is poor. Colombia has critical shortfalls in military and police force manning. Larger security force requires additional revenues, which Colombia isn't able to collect. Without sufficient tax revenues, Colombia can not provide essential services to its population. In 2000, Colombia's external debt was 43 percent of GDP. Only ten percent of the population pays any form of tax at all.³³ In Colombia

only 10.2 percent of the government income come from taxes and finances; the remainder of its budget is international debt. To adequately control tax evasion would take 20,000 personnel; 8,000 personnel assigned to the task.³⁴

POOR FINANCIAL HEALTH

The Triad's insurgency drains Colombia's economy and revenues. Urban violence is thought to decrease Colombia's GDP by four % each year.³⁵ Twenty Five percent of Colombia's health expenses are linked to intentional injuries. The figure is three percent in the remainder of Latin America.³⁶

The counter-insurgency in Colombia requires a significant force to protect the citizens from the insurgents, deter attacks on Colombia critical infrastructure, and attack the triad's critical vulnerabilities. The paramilitaries and guerillas of the triads are estimated at approximately 35,000.³⁷ Establishing law and security in Colombia is a complex operation, especially when annual drug profits currently in insurgent treasuries amount to five percent of Colombian GDP. Through interdiction, eradication, and destruction of manufacturing infrastructure, the U.S. and Colombia can deny them these spoils.³⁸

The RAND study, "Burden of Victory: The Painful Arithmetic of Stability Operations," holds that of a successful force ratio for complex security operations, like those countering insurgencies in Northern Ireland, Malaysia, and Bosnia, call for ratios of 20 or more friendly to enemy personnel.³⁹ By comparison, maintaining the rule of law in peaceful nations requires a security ratio of only two to one. A security force, national police and military force, 20 times the strength of the triad's 35,000 combatants would equal a force of 700,000 or more. Colombia's current security force dedicated to the counter-insurgency is between 60,000 to 80,000.⁴⁰

Many Colombians, faced with endemic violence, corruption, and inept government policies have migrated to other countries. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) was somewhere between one and two million. Many of those remaining have fled ungoverned areas where terrorists find sanctuary, logistical bases, training, and planning for future attacks.⁴¹ According to the U.S. State Department, Colombia has the third largest number of displaced persons in the world. The insurgency and lack the of rule of law that prevent relief agencies from providing assistance to the IDP. These displaced persons, lacking hope and a means to survive, and holding animosity against the Colombian Government, are ideal candidates for recruitment to the triad.

REVITALIZING U.S. AID COLOMBIA

In 1999, the combination of a failed counter-drug campaign, a near coup d'etat, rampant growth in the supply of illicit drugs to the U.S., and the risk of the city Bogotá falling to the insurgents had generated crisis conditions. The Drug Czar, Barry McCaffrey, assessed the Colombian situation as grave. McCaffrey believed the situation jeopardized U.S. national interests. The Office of National Drug Control Policy proposed that Congress authorize emergency assistance to Plan Colombia.

A number of factors made assistance to Colombia a difficult sell to Congress. The war against the supply side of drugs was a failure, the supply and cost of illicit drugs had remained unchanged. Colombia's history of incompetence in governance and its rampant corruption was only equaled by its military's poor human rights record. There were rumors the military conducted massacres. These factors generated misgivings of a greater U.S. role in Colombia. And the quagmire of Vietnam, the result of an extended counterinsurgency, loomed in the minds of many Congressmen who feared increased involvement in Colombia would lead to another Vietnam.

McCaffrey, who was a retired Army general, thought U.S. foreign policy makers who wanted to aid Colombia pushed for aid packages that were politically-correct political strategies, but not effective military strategies.⁴² McCaffrey proposed a new plan for countering the Colombia crisis to President Clinton. The plan called for action from the federal government; a plan that was strongly resisted. McCaffrey put the principals on the spot and won the President's support for a \$1 billion dollar counter-drug assistance and restoration of democratic institutions plan, titled Plan Colombia.

IMPLEMENTING PLAN COLOMBIA

Plan Colombia officially became U.S. policy when President Clinton signed a foreign assistance package for Colombia valued at \$1.3 billion on July 13, 2000. The total cost of Plan Colombia is \$7.5 billion over a five year period. The Colombian Government would provide \$4 billion, the U.S. \$1.3B, and the European Union and others \$2.2B. Plan Colombia focused on efforts to bring a negotiated peace process to fruition.

The funds committed to assisting Colombia by focusing on seven primary areas. The first area, alternative development, is the concept of providing small farmers a viable alternative to growing crops destined for illicit drug manufacturing. The second area, helping IDP, is a multi-layered approach to the reduction of negative effects of IDP. The third area, protection of human rights, attempts to improve the judicial system, especially countering violations of the

public's human rights. The fourth area for emphasis is the improvement of governing capacity and reform of the judicial system. The fifth emphasis area, regional concerns and the peace process, includes programs on negotiation training, studies of Colombian social and economic issues, and Non Governmental Organizations activities assisting in the peace process with the insurgents. The sixth area addressed illicit crop eradication and support for the Colombian police. Eradication focuses on eliminating coca in southern Colombia region of Putumayo. These crops are being destroyed by aircraft spraying the fields with an herbicide named Glyphosate. The seventh section is interdiction of illicit drug shipments . Stopping the transportation of illicit drugs out of the source zone is a principal element of Plan Colombia.

PROBLEMS WITH PLAN COLUMBIA

The primary causes of problems for Plan Colombia have resulted from a lack of Colombia's good leadership and governance and the U.S. Congress's commitment sufficient assistance of the right kind to Colombia. Lack of world support has also deterred the success of Plan Colombia.

Successful implementation of Plan Colombia depended on effective Colombia leadership and governance. President Pastrana, elected in 1998, was incapable of providing either. Pastrana lacked the moral courage and leadership to implement Plan Colombia. His inept and corrupt administration hurt the plan's effectiveness. Pastrana was convinced that a soft approach and the granting of various concessions to the insurgents as incentives would bring the insurgents to the peace table. Under Pastrana's weak leadership, Colombia's problems led to conditions which made the Plan difficult to implement. The Plan assumed the insurgents would negotiate for peace.

President Pastrana hoped to pacify the insurgents and filtered all his actions or lack of action through this perspective. Fearing expanded reprisals, Pastrana did not want to confront the FARC with military operations. Believing this conciliatory act would bring the FARC to the peace negotiation table, Pastrana allowed the FARC to possess a demilitarized zone the size of Switzerland. Pastrana's administration was characterized as omnipresent corruption. His administration was riddled with illegal government contracts, embezzlement, and Plan Colombia funds that ended up in the pockets of government officials.

From a global perspective, problems in Colombian seem trivial. The U.S. involvement with two major regime changes in Iraq and Afghanistan and a GWOT has diminished the importance of Colombia's problems on the world stage. Defending the reasons for the invasion

of Iraq is consuming the Bush administration and the federal budget. The world views the U.S. as the global hegemon, thrusting its will in prescriptive and preemptive war.

The U.S. is seen as the greatest consumer of illicit drugs, so the Colombian problem is seen as a U.S. problem. Moving the administration, not to mention the American people and Congress to conduct another military campaign could prove extremely difficult. However, inaction in the face of the triad threat weakens the entire NSS. Our inaction and ineffectiveness in putting teeth into the NSS would be observed by other countries. In the long run, the deterrent effect of the NSS to rogue nations will be weakened.

European and Japanese promises to support Plan Colombia waned as their funding never met its promised level. Their justification for the lack of support is that Plan Colombia morphed from a balanced, diplomatic instrument of power into a U.S. sponsored military campaign. In fact, European, Canadian, Japanese, and United Nations officials met in San Vicente in southeastern Colombia to meet with the FARC. The FARC invited ambassadors from Europe to meet with coca and poppy farmers to discuss the negative effects of Plan Colombia. This action was seen a major coup for the FARC as their organization reached recognition as a legitimate government entity by these international statesmen. The FARC's goal was to divide the EU from U.S. assessments regarding the best path to resolve of the Colombian problem. Most importantly, the EU feels aggressive actions against the triad is not productive, and favors pursuit of peaceful solutions. The EU does not favor the U.S. plan for military campaigns against the insurgents.⁴³

SUCSESSES OF PLAN COLOMBIA

President Uribe generated the first significant progress in the implementation of Plan Colombia. Uribe captured the political will and economic resources necessary to obtain tangible results. The Department of State's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, dated 1 March 2004, documents progress in reducing the drug trade for the first time in 30 years. Yet, the report goes on to say that war, corruption, insurgency, and economic problems continue to plague Colombia.⁴⁴ A look at the details of Plan Colombia reveals challenges in the implementation of Plan Colombia prior to the Uribe administration: lack of Congressional support manifested in critical financial shortfalls in U.S. assistance programs, accompanied by poor strategic leadership in Colombia.

Elected in May 2002, President Alvaro Uribe's leadership and courage have taken the country in a new direction improving governmental effectiveness in dealing with the insurgency and its effects. The citizens of Colombia were frustrated with the lack of effectiveness of

previous Colombian presidential leadership to bring about security and stability through Plan Colombia. President Uribe was elected on a platform that emphasized establishing government control throughout Colombia. President Uribe declared a State of Limited Emergency to provide governmental authority to begin programs to counter the insurgency

President Uribe developed a NSS similar to the U.S. NSS. Entitled the “Democratic Security and Defense Policy”, the policy has five primary objectives: consolidation of State control throughout Colombia to deny sanctuary to terrorists and perpetrators of violence; protection of the population through the increase of State presence and a corresponding reduction in violence; destruction of the illegal drug trade in Colombia to eliminate the revenues which finance terrorism and generate corruption and crime; maintenance of a deterrent military capability as a long-term guarantee of democratic sustainability; and transparent and efficient management of resources as a means to reform and improve the performance of government.⁴⁵

This new strategy promises real solutions to defeat the Colombian insurgency. Most significant is the government commitment to increase its defense budget from 3.6% to 6% of GDP by 2006.⁴⁶ To the U.S. Congress, this increase demonstrates a real commitment, rather than the lip service offered by previous Presidents Samper and Pastrana. President Uribe’s goal is to raise the number of security forces from 250,000 to 850,000 in the next four years.⁴⁷ Paralleling the U.S. NSS, it supports the use of force to establish control of the ungoverned areas from the terrorist triad. As time passes, however, the insurgents become stronger and the affects of insurgency continue. Without adequate resources, Colombia will not implement this new strategy in a timely fashion. With increased resources from the U.S., we will see timely results.

President Uribe initiated programs to reduce government spending and increase tax revenues. Initiating a war tax of 1.2% on the liquid assets of all Colombians whose assets exceeded \$65,000,⁴⁸ he realized a revenue increase of \$800 million to improve the security forces. This is equivalent to 20 months of U.S. aid to Colombia. President Uribe also cut social spending to increase funds to build security capabilities. Unfortunately, this initiative is promoting discontent with the 64% of Colombia’s population that exists on less than \$2 a day.

The results of Uribe’s strong leadership and effective use of Plan Colombia funding and programs is a success story for U.S. foreign policy. The statistics in the table below clearly show that Plan Colombia is returning the rule of law and security to the country.

EFFECTS OF PLAN COLUMBIA	
As reported for period 31 July 2002 through 31 August 2003	
EFFECT	IMPACT
Police presence	increased 50 percent
Kidnappings	decreased 23 percent
Increase security forces on road structure	Illegal check points reduced by 45 percent
Increasing the security force	decreased murder rate by 16 percent.
Increasing the security force	The number of massacres conducted by the triad of insurgents reduced by 41 percent
Terrorists' attacks on the 490 mile oil pipeline	reduced by 31 percent
Electrical power towers attacks	36 percent reduction
Road bridge attacks	50 percent reduction
6,000 terrorist captured	126 percent improvement
AUC members killed	87 percent increase
Eradication of illicit drug crops	reduction of 32 percent
Eradication efforts	prevented as estimated \$10 billion of cocaine from reaching its markets
Seizures of liquid cocaine precursor chemicals	increased by 30
Seizures solid cocaine precursor chemicals	increased by 51 percent

TABLE 1: IMPROVEMENTS UNDER PLAN COLUMBIA

The U.S. has contributed to the effectiveness of Plan Columbia by expanding authorities for the use of military equipment, training, and funding to combat narco-terrorists. These expanded authorities recognized the fact that terror groups were using profits from illicit drug sales to fund their insurgency operations. Specifically, this change will greatly increase Columbia's ability to carry out the programs of the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

President Bush's NSS directs that terror groups threatening the interest of the U.S. or its allies will be found and eliminated.⁴⁹ Thus, these terror groups are legitimate targets in the GWOT. President Bush's order to conduct a global war on terror (GWOT) opens the window of opportunity for a new multi-national approach to solving the multifaceted problems of Colombia.

Until security is established in Colombia, economic, social and judicial reforms will be difficult to achieve. Establishing security and the rule of law is the first step in eliminating the Colombian crisis. In 2002, President Bush validated the lack of rule of law in uncontrolled sanctuaries as the center of gravity for narco-terrorism.⁵⁰ Previous U.S. strategies have incorrectly identified the illicit drug trade and the insurgents as the enemy center of gravity in the Colombian crisis.

The government of Colombia should appoint a strategic level counter-insurgency czar. This czar would coordinate and synchronize all government activities from the federal to the local level to defeat the insurgency. Reflected at each level would be a counter-terrorism section dedicated to offensive operations against the insurgents, another section would focus on preventative measures for defeating insurgent attacks (anti-terrorism), and a third section would develop processes to mitigate the effects of successful insurgent attacks.

Colombia does not have enough military or police to secure Colombia. We must continue current counter-drug operations, and provide even greater support through equipment, training, and manpower. Colombia should institute a home guard program. In this home guard program, civilians would be trained and equipped to defend their towns against the insurgents. Emphasis would be placed on the importance of human rights and judicious use of power. A robust communications network would provide a safety net for the home guard defenders when attacks by the insurgents surpass the home guards capacity. Police and the military should be increased per President Uribe's goal.

Illicit drugs are not the center of gravity but a key enabler for funding the insurgents operations. The illicit drug trade has proven nearly impossible to control. Despite decades of successful interdiction and eradication efforts, the price or supply of drugs to the U.S. has not diminished. The insurgents have used drug profits to equip their armies with better equipment than the Colombian military.

Fielded forces of insurgents are not the enemy center of gravity. Thousands of insurgents have been killed over the decades yet the number of the insurgents is the largest it has been in history. We must post omnipresent security forces throughout the populace, thereby denying freedom of action to the terrorist. Columbia can establish the rule of law by providing greater numbers of security forces, military, police, and citizen soldiers.

Colombia requires the U.S. to provide force multipliers and enablers to defeat the insurgency. The security forces in Colombia are small in number and must react to insurgent activities throughout a massive geographic region. Key systems to enhance Colombia security forces are intelligence, communication, and logistical systems.

Intelligence systems are the life blood behind effective counter-insurgencies. The U.S. should assist Colombia in developing and exploiting all source intelligence. Traditional intelligence cycles of direction, collection, processing, and dissemination are slow and unresponsive in Colombia. It is essential that the information cycle is accelerated to allow rapid distribution from the tactical to strategic levels of government and reverse. Modernizing communications equipment would help relieve this problem. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles should be provided to allow sensitive target reconnaissance.

Communication systems must be distributed throughout the country for situational awareness of insurgent activity and locations. Secure communications equipment is essential to provide combat forces the element of surprise during raids and attacks. Successful raids and attacks require excellent logistics.

Effective logistics allow the combat forces to mass and maneuver over large geographic regions and attack the insurgents. Colombia needs more helicopters for transportation, attacks, medevac, and resupply.

It has been said that a man who looks in the mirror and immediately forgets what he saw is the worst type of fool. The U.S. must look in the mirror and see Colombia for what it is, a host of transnational demons that must be eliminated for the long term security of the United States.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Barry R. McCaffrey, The Drug Scourge as a Hemispheric Problem, Carlisle, PA; USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, August 2001, U.S. Army War College, 7.

² McCaffrey, 5. The FBI's definition of WMD is perhaps even more appropriate for defining domestic threats of WMD on the citizen mass. The FBI's definition is "A weapon of mass destruction, though typically associated with nuclear/radiological, chemical, or biological agents, may also take the form of explosives, such as in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma in 1995. A weapon crosses the WMD threshold when the consequences of its release overwhelm local responders."

³ Ellen N. La Motte, "The Opium Monopoly-History of the Opium Trade in China", available from <<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Histroy/om/om15.htm>>; Internet; accessed 8 February 2004.

⁴ Raymond J. Ahearn, "Trade and the Americas", 18 June 2003; available from <<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/22169.pdf>>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2004.

⁵ American Friends Service Committee, "Colombia's Oil Sector—An Overview," available from <http://www.afsc.org>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2004.

⁶ The triad of FARC, ELN, and AUC are on the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Terrorist Organization list.

⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁸ George W. Bush, "The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism", February 2003; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nssall.html>; Internet; accessed 17 December 2003.

⁹ Dennis Hastert, "Speech to U.S. House of Representatives," 29 March 2000: available from <<http://www.ciponline.org/Colombia/031603.htm>>; Internet; accessed 8 February 2004. House Speaker Dennis Hastert detailed the effects of Colombia's massive destructive power to U.S. domestic well being when petitioning Congress for U.S. aid to Colombia. He said, "Colombia is the source of 90% of the Cocaine and 65% of the heroin that reaches our neighborhoods, our schools, and our children. Over 52,000 Americans die every year from illegal drug use. These are real casualties of a quiet, deadly battle that is wage on the streets of our cities, our towns, our neighborhoods, and our schools."

¹⁰ George W. Bush, "National Drug Control Strategy", February 2003; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nssal.html>; Internet; accessed 2 October 2003.

¹¹ Stephen Johnson, "Helping Colombia Fix its Plan to Curb Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Insurgency", 26 April 2001; available from <http://www.heritage.org>; Internet; accessed 17 February 2004

¹² Bush, 33.

¹³ George W. Bush, "The National Security Strategy", 17 September 2003; available from <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nssall.html>>; Internet; accessed Jan 4, 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, 8.

¹⁷ Ibid, 3.

¹⁸ Ibid, 8.

¹⁹ Bush, The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 11.

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook—Colombia", available from <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/co.html>>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2004.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gabriel Marcella, Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads, Carlisle, PA; USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, March 1999, 2.

²³ Daniel Christman and John Heimann, "Andes 2020: A New Strategy for the Challenges of Colombia and the Region", available from <<http://www.cfr.org>>; Internet; accessed 20 February 2004.

²⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development, "Foreign Aid in the National Interest-Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity", 2002; available from <<http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2003/sp030107.html>>; Internet; accessed 20 February, 2004.

²⁵ Gabriel Marcella, The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity, Carlisle, PA; USAWC, 23 May 2003, 9.

²⁶ James Wilson, "Colombian Warfare Lands on Mayors' Doorsteps", available from <<http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/colombia/145.html>>; Internet; accessed 22 February 2004.

²⁷ Marcella, The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity, 18.

²⁸ Ibid, 15.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Cynthia J. Arnson, "U.S. Interests and Options in Colombia: An Alternative Framework", available from <http://www.ciaonet.org>; Internet; accessed 15 December 2003.

³¹ Jong-Wha Lee, "Education", 5 April 5 2000; available at www.caf.com/attach/4/default/Education_Jong-WhaLee, Internet; accessed 23 February 2004.

³² Anthony P. Maingot, "Studying Corruption in Colombia", 12 March 1991; available from <<http://www.ndu.edu>>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2004.

³³ Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity*, 18.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Eduardo Aninat, "The Economic Foundations of Peace", available from <<http://www.imf.org>>; Internet; accessed 24 February 2004.

³⁷ John A. Cope, "Colombia's War: Toward a New Strategy", October 2002; available at <<http://copeej.ndu.edu>>; Internet; accessed on 23 February 2004.

³⁸ James L. Zackrison, "Introduction: Possible Scenarios for Colombia's Future", available from <<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/books.html>>; Internet; accessed 16 October, 2004.

³⁹ James T. Quionlivan, "Burden of Victory: The Painful Arithmetic of Stability Operations", Summer 2003; available at <<http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/summer2003/burden.html>>; Internet; accessed 23 February 2004.

⁴⁰ Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity*, 10.

⁴¹ Arnson, 2.

⁴² Dennis M. Rempe, *The Past as Prologue? A History of U.S. Counterinsurgency in Colombia, 1958-66*, Carlisle, PA: USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2002, 32.

⁴³ CNN Americas, "Colombian Farmers Plead for Help from Europe, Americas, in War on Drugs", 30 June 2000; available from <<http://www.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/america/06/30/colombia.rebels/>>; Internet; accessed on 14 February 2004.

⁴⁴ Charlene Porter, "Remarkable Progress" Against Drug Trafficking in 2003", 1 March 2004; available from <<http://www.usembassy.it>>; Internet; accessed March 15, 2004

⁴⁵ Ministry of Defense, Republic of Colombia, "The Effectiveness of the Colombian Democratic Security and Defense Policy", August 2002; available from <<http://www.colombiaemb.org/defense/>>; Internet, accessed 17 November 2003.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity*, 18.

⁴⁹ Bush, *The National Security Strategy*, 4.

⁵⁰ Bush, *The National Security Strategy*, 1.

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